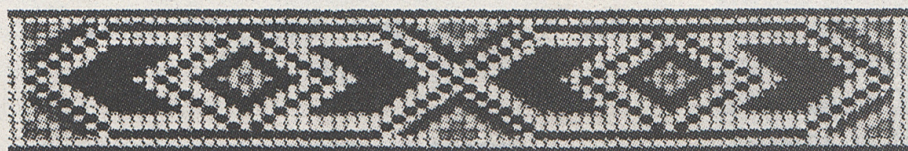




Resolution on THE PATH TO NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN LIBERATION

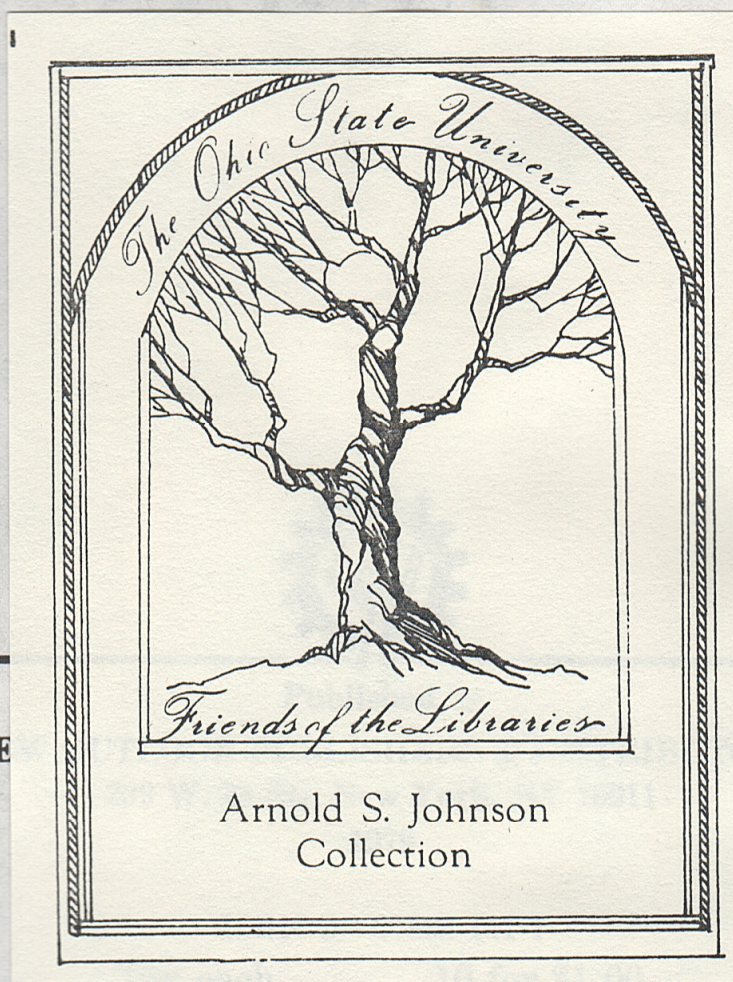
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Resolution on The Path to Native American Indian Liberation

A crisis exists for the Native American Indian peoples. The American Indian and Alaska Native peoples and nationalities are fighting for their very survival against the power of state monopoly capitalism. They are victimized by the wanton exploitation and destruction of their lands and energy resources by powerful transnational corporations, by the government's neo-colonialist policies in Indian affairs and its full cooperation with the monopolies. The result is astronomical unemployment and the super exploitation of Indian labor, extreme social and economic deprivation, social and cultural genocide. These immediate realities are justified by a racist and national chauvinist ideology used by the U.S. ruling class as the cover and pretext for the continued lucrative plunder of Native American Indian lands, resources and labor.

The expropriation of the lands and resources of the indigenous peoples of the United States constituted the economic basis for genocide in past centuries. It resulted in the brutal extermination of over 90 percent of the original population and yielded the vast fertile lands and natural resources needed by the capitalist class to economically develop and industrialize the United States. To the genocidal practices of the past must now be added the policies and techniques of the contemporary age—such as sterilization, uranium poisoning, Indian “education,” Bureau of Indian Affairs tyranny, FBI “law and order,” destruction of the ecology and environment through stripmining and “development,” and enforced poverty.

The Native American Indian peoples have a glorious history of militant resistance. Today they are continuing their long struggle by resisting the onslaught launched by monopoly capitalism to drive them off their remaining lands and resources. There is growing unity in their struggle for land rights, for sovereignty over rich resources, for their culture and self-government, which has resulted in some significant victories. At the same time, however, Native American militants are being subjected to severe forms of repression. Leaders of the political movement have been killed, jailed unjustly, and harassed. There are currently a number of unsolved and uninvestigated murders of Indians in South Dakota, some committed by police against American Indian Movement militants. This occurs within the context of the general oppression, such as the fact that as high 35 percent of Native American Indian women have been sterilized without their consent.

Poverty is extremely severe for those on reservations. On the 24 largest reservations in 1970, 55.1 percent existed below the poverty line. On the two largest federally-recognized reservations, the deficit family income (the extra amount needed to reach the poverty level!) was \$2,844 and \$2,329 respectively. In the urban areas one out of four live in poverty. In 1970 the median income was \$7,323 for all Indian families, and \$3,695 for those with a female head.

The official overall unemployment rate in 1970 was 10.7 percent. The official rate, however, hides real unemployment, which averages about 37 percent for those living on or near reservations and rural villages; 55 percent when those with temporary employment are included. Only 63 percent were in the workforce in 1970, compared to 75 for Blacks and 80 percent for whites. Tens of thousands of Indian and Alaska Native workers have become part of what Marx termed "the Lazarus layers of the permanently unemployed."

Excluding people from economic life is the structural basis for the social genocide practiced by capitalism against the Native American Indian peoples, and is a present-day extension of the genocide of the past.

The key aspect of the Native American Indian struggle is that it is being waged by oppressed indigenous nationalities for survival. The Indian and Alaska Native populations, about two million strong, are in reality comprised of many smaller peoples and nationalities. Despite capitalism's policy of cultural genocide, the majority of these still maintain their respective language, culture and identity. These oppressed nationalities have territories comprising some 2.4 percent of the United States and containing an estimated \$1,000 billion worth of coal reserves alone. For most of these peoples and nationalities there exist treaties, agreements and laws which define territory and recognize a limited sovereignty. This provides a legal basis for the struggle that must be developed into a larger mass struggle for fuller sovereignty over their existing land bases and for the full benefits from their natural resources.

The Native American Indian political movement is a just people's movement against some of the world's most rapacious and powerful monopolies—Continental Oil, Exxon, AMAX, Shell, Gulf Oil, Peabody Coal and Utah International Mining. It is therefore an integral part of the developing anti-monopoly struggle and movement.

Marxist-Leninist science teaches that there are both positive and negative aspects to a national movement, its class content being the determining factor. The Native American Indian struggle is part of the overall struggle to curb monopoly power. The full support of the working class—the trade union movement in the first place—must be won for the just demands of the Native American Indian peoples. This is in the best self-interest of the working class and the vast majority of the people of the United States, and is fundamental to any winning perspective.

The solutions to the struggle of the Native American Indian peoples must be found in the application of Marxist-Leninist principles to the national question in the fight for development, full freedom and equality for oppressed national minorities and peoples. The larger nationalities include: 23,000 Apache; 66,000 Cherokee; 42,000 Chippewa; 24,000 Choctaw and Houma; 17,000 Creek, Alabama and Coushatta; 35,000 Eskimo; 21,000 Iroquois; 28,000

Lumbee; 154,000 Navajo; 31,000 Pueblo peoples; and 60,000 Dakota Sioux. Altogether there are 115 officially recognized peoples and nationalities with populations of 2,300 or greater. The rich experience of the Soviet Union, with its "cultural in form, socialist in content" formula for solving the national question, can serve as a guide, but, of course, not as a blueprint.

The original or primary accumulation of capital in the United States was at the expense of both the Afro-American and Indian peoples. The enslavement of millions of Africans provided a vast source of labor for superexploitation, while the genocidal dispossession of the Indians provided the soil on which Afro-Americans were forced to toil. Thus the fate of these oppressed peoples was linked in history, although in different ways, to the accumulation of the great wealth of U.S. capitalism. Karl Marx' historic words should not be forgotten:

"The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production" (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 751).

And, "if money . . . 'comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek,' capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (*Capital*, Vol. I, p. 760).

Today, the theft continues, chiefly through the forced settlement of Native American Indian claims, the object being to drive Native American Indians off their remaining lands. And since there is no more "useless" land on which to "relocate" Native American Indians, they are increasingly relegated to the cesspools of poverty in the cities, condemned to extinction as indigenous peoples and nationalities. This is monopoly capital's way of solving the Indian "problem."

The loss of land continues, but it is the gobbling up of natural resources that is the hallmark of the dispossession today. Rich resources have been discovered on Native American Indian lands. According to the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT), the 23 Indian nationalities of 10 western states, representing some two-thirds of the total population, have 33 percent of the country's low-sulphur, strippable coal, 80 percent of its uranium reserves, and three to 10 percent of all petroleum and gas. Alaska, with its large Native American Indian population, has an inestimable wealth in natural resources. Now that the technology has been developed, the energy monopolies plan to extract these resources at an even higher rate of profit than in the past.

Theoretically, energy-rich Native American Indians should be receiving substantial royalties. The Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy, in the service to Exxon et al, however, set mineral royalty rates at a minimum. As a consequence, the corporations get richer while reservation Indians continue to live in poverty. The Jicarilla Apache, for example, received a mere \$685,000 in bonus money for oil leases that would be worth at least \$80 million if the fair royalty value had been paid.

The government maintains that energy extraction is a cure-all for reservation under-

development, but this is not the case. For example, although more than \$1 billion have been invested in plant facilities in the Navajo Nation, only \$17 million a year is realized in both personal and tribal income. A minimum of \$380 million per year for 10 years are required just to bring the Navajo standard of living up to the national average. Under prevailing capitalist relations, energy extraction is leading to underdevelopment and genocide, not development!

The federal government through the BIA runs the reservations and villages from top to bottom. In 1972 an Indian coalition, the Trail of Broken Treaties, found that the Bureau was spending \$1 billion annually on Indian affairs and labeled this the "billion dollar indignity," because little trickles down to the reservation masses. But in spite of government waste and bureaucracy, Interior and the BIA does its real job well—helping monopoly capitalism superexploit Native American Indian lands, resources and labor:

The U.S. Department of the Interior is a chamber of the mighty. Oil and gas billionaires, lumber barons, ranchers and corporate farmers, sportsmen and recreation interests, hydroelectric and mining promoters number among its customary clientele and constituency (Edgar Cahn, *Our Brother's Keeper*, 1969, p. 157).

One of the Bureau's main responsibilities is education, yet half of all reservation Indians have less than eighth grade education, and three of four never complete high school. Those who control Indian education are neither Indians nor educators. The main outcome of Indian "education" is social and cultural genocide. Few Native American Indians have been able to attain higher education (there are fewer than 25 Indian doctors in the U.S.), yet Native American Indian programs are being dismantled in the colleges and universities.

The administration of Indian affairs must therefore be radically restructured so that the reservations are under full Indian control and the economic benefits are realized by the masses.

The roots of oppression stem from the original conquest—the dispossession and genocide. In 1883 the government framed a racist criminal code "to do away with demoralizing and barbarous customs." So-called Indian offenses were on the books until the 1940s, and the reservations run like centers of apartheid rather than as autonomous national areas. Not until 1924 did the Snyder Act declare citizenship to all U.S. Indians (as if the 14th Amendment were insufficient). Many Indians protested this unilateral act of Congress.

Indians were forbidden by federal law to drink alcohol until after World War II; many places in the country forbade them to enter public places, and miscegenation laws were on the books in many states. The civil rights movement was a decisive factor in lessening some of the worse aspects of racism, but many racist practices and its institutionalized forms remain.

Native Americans Indians are constantly victimized by police; they are given longer sentences and are paroled less often. It is impossible to obtain a fair trial, because an Indian is never tried by a jury of her or his peers, and usually has no money for a lawyer. Over a century of racist myths affect the judge, jury, and the legal system itself.

An extremely dangerous development is the Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities (ICERR), now organized in 23 states. Comprised of elements of the Klan,

Nazis and the ultra-right, it is spearheading legislation to do away with treaty rights and reservation status. Communists must take the initiative in helping to win the labor movement and other anti-monopoly forces to smash this attack from the right.

Native American Indians are "ripped off" not only through the exploitation of lands and resources, but through their labor power as well. Racism and its derogatory stereotypes (the "incompetent" or "drunken Indian") provides the justification for the Indian wage differential.

The vast majority are in the working class: there are no capitalists, very small business people, only a handful of high income professionals, and a dwindling number of independent agriculturalists and herders. According to the 1970 Census, about 60 percent of all the men who work are operatives, including transport; craftsmen, foremen and the like; and laborers, except farm. Seventy percent of all women who work are service workers, except private household; clerical workers and operatives.

Since Native American Indians have little real control over reservation development, few jobs are generated. Thus the struggle for self-government is an integral part of the fight for full employment. Ironically, because of the federal relationship and reservation underdevelopment, the government, through the BIA and the Public Health Service, is the single largest employer of full-time workers. Twenty-four percent of the Indians in the national work force, and 32 percent of workers on the reservations are government employees of one kind or another, mostly federal.

The number of Indian workers in basic industry is therefore small, even though there are sizable concentrations in fishing, mining, (especially uranium), lumber, electronics, steel, and railroad. In these industries they play a vanguard role in worker's struggles and for their people's liberation. Examples of this: The Fairchild Electronics occupation; the Northwest Coast Indian fishermen fighting for their fishing rights; the occupation of Four Corners Coal Gasification Plant by Navajo workers and the 1978 strike by Native uranium miners of the Laguna reservation. In all these cases, noticeably lacking was support by the U.S. Labor movement. Such divisions in the working class play directly into the hands of the transnational corporations, the very promoters of racist antagonisms, stereotyping, and class disunity.

With respect to union membership, it appears that a high proportion, especially in the rural or reservation areas, are unorganized. Many tribal council governments in the past, being under the thumb of the BIA, have barred unions, but this is now changing. The Navajo Nation, which formerly outlawed unions, now has an estimated 6,600 union members, about 12 percent of the work force and 25 percent of all those employed. Membership is in Building Crafts and Skills Unions, Laborers, Railway Workers, United Mine Workers, and Operating Engineers.

Many Native Americans belong to craft unions. They are well represented in the building trades as ironworkers, roofers and laborers; significant numbers are also in plumbers, elevator constructors, asbestos workers and plasterers. In the non-building trades, almost half are Teamsters. Indian women workers are found mainly in the Hotel and Restaurant Employees, and in the Teamsters. The states of Alaska, Montana, New Mexico and Oklahoma have significant percentages of this membership.

While there are no statistics available, presumably substantial numbers are also active in the lumber and paper workers unions, in OCAW, and in the United Steelworkers, which has most of the western metal miners.

It should be noted that Native Americans are especially concentrated in industries with poor safety and health conditions, and high accident rates, such as high rise structural iron workers and bridge builders (Senecas in New York); small boat ocean fishing (Indian, Eskimo and Aleut workers in Alaska); drilling for oil and gas (Oklahoma and Southwest); asbestos workers; metal mining and smelting; and uranium workers.

Hundreds of Navajo uranium miners face the prospect of lung cancer—dozens are already dead—as a result of unregulated radiation exposure in Kerr-McGee mines during the 1950s and 1960s.

Native American Indian peoples have consistently waged struggles against the United States government since its inception. These struggles have taken on many forms, from armed warfare to negotiations. However, there was a qualitative change in the 1950's. The founding of all-Indian organizations, whose main goal was practical action to reclaim land and resources and recognition of treaty provisions, resulted in winning some federally funded programs and, most importantly, the return of some lands and resources.

The National Indian Youth Council, a youth protest group, was founded in 1960. The Survival of American Indians Association was formed in the latter half of the 1950s. Both were involved in the fishing rights struggle in Washington state. The Alaska Federation of Natives, responding to Eskimo, Aleut and Indian regional political agitation for land claims, was organized in 1966.

In 1968 the American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in Minnesota. Originally organized to combat urban racism and to organize Indian survival schools, it soon founded chapters in many states and organized demonstrations, culminating in what is probably now its best-known support action, the 1973 "occupation" of Wounded Knee in defense of Oglala Sioux civil rights. Earlier, in 1969, the take-over of Alcatraz, the former prison island in San Francisco Bay, signalled the beginning of a series of land occupations.

Recently, the Council of Energy Rich Tribes (CERT) was formed. Termed the "Indian OPEC," it represents an amalgam of class, nationality and political forces with the purpose of raising royalty rates and getting a better deal from the energy monopolies.

Another significant development is the founding of Women of All Red Nations (WARN), a militant Indian women's organization.

The high points in the growing protest movement have been the Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan in 1972 on the eve of the national elections, with its occupation of the BIA offices and presentation of a program of reform, the "Twenty Points"; the 1973 Wounded Knee demonstration on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota; the formation of the grassroots coalition, the International Indian Treaty Council in 1974; and the 1977 United Nations-related Geneva Conference on Discrimination Against the Indian Peoples and Nations of the Americas, the organizational effort having been sparkplugged by the Treaty Council and the World Peace Council; and the longest protest march in U.S. history, the "Longest March" in 1978.

These actions and others show the steady progress toward ever greater unity in action and in a common set of demands. There are also greater efforts to bring the Native American Indian question to the attention of progressive international forces and to enlist their support, which shows a maturing consciousness that the Native American Indian question is part of the general world revolutionary struggle.

This upsurge in political action is being met by increasing repression from the federal and state governments. In South Dakota hundreds of activists have been murdered, jailed as

political prisoners, have simply disappeared, or their deaths listed as "accidental" by the officials. The Oglala people at Pine Ridge have filed more than 6,000 written complaints concerning violations of their civil rights, but to no avail.

Among those jailed for political reasons are John Hill (survivor of Attica), Herbert Powless, Michael Studevant, Richard Marshall, and Leonard Peltier. Russell Means, an Oglala leader, has been shot and jailed innumerable times since Wounded Knee in 1973.

A broader movement needs to be developed by the anti-monopoly and democratic forces in defense of these courageous leaders.

The Indian Left is increasingly giving its attention to the anti-monopoly aspects of the struggle and is beginning to work with progressive unions. The Treaty Council, for example, is represented in the Progressive Alliance, formed last spring in Detroit by Douglas Fraser of the UAW. There is a heightened interest in electoral politics. The need for electoral struggle, and for the Native American Indian masses to be represented as nationalities at the state and federal level, is vitally important. At the same time, there are still forces in the movement influenced by the ultra-left who follow a narrow nationalism, who assert a "fourth world" identity, who see "industrialization" or "Westernization" as the enemy rather than the monopoly capitalists.

It is therefore the task of the Communist Party USA, and its members to help build the strongest possible unity of the working class and the anti-monopoly movement in fighting for the immediate demands of the Native American Indian peoples. Successes in this struggle will help strengthen the influence of the Left that is developing within the Native American Indian movement, and increase the possibilities for winning immediate gains.

In the process of this struggle, the Communist Party also seeks to further develop the study and application of the scientific theory and experience of Marxism-Leninism to work out successful solutions to the question of full Native American Indian liberation.

It is in this context that we propose and support the following general demands:

1. The right of Native American Indian peoples to be recognized as distinct nationalities, with sovereignty over reservations, including the right to levy taxes on corporate property, to self-government, and full jurisdiction over trial and punishment for violation of laws. The administration of Indian affairs must be radically restructured so that all Federal agencies, including the BIA, and the reservations are under full Indian control and the economic benefits are realized by the masses.

2. The right of Native American Indian peoples to retain and expand their land bases, to control their resources, which include historic water, fishing and mineral rights, and recognition of the treaty relationship as a basis for reclaiming jurisdiction over land and resources.

3. An immediate end to all forms of harassment, to violent and criminal assaults against Native American Indian peoples and their leaders by State and Federal agencies, including the terrorist police agencies (FBI, CIA, etc.). The immediate release of all political prisoners now illegally incarcerated or pending trial for fighting for their human rights as Native American Indian peoples.

4. The right to receive full value for all resources taken from their lands and waters, and the right to take over monopoly enterprises and place them under cooperative or other forms of people's control, and to develop their own industries and resources.
5. An end to all genocidal practices, such as sterilization and medical experimentation, being carried out against Native American peoples.
6. The right to use their respective languages, religions, customs and traditions, and to the sanctity of religious sites and burial grounds.
7. Prompt turning over to the indigenous peoples of Alaska all of the 40 million acres due them under the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act. Also add to reservation and village lands contiguous to towns and mineral areas, so as to improve the economic viability of Alaska Native peoples.
8. The right to full representation in all levels of government, thus giving Native American Indian peoples and nationalities a voice in those bodies that make laws and decide policies that affect their lives and interests. One possible way of helping to achieve this could be the granting of the right to elect one Congressman from each reservation with a population of, say, 2300 or more, and one U.S. Senator from each nationality with a population of 20,000 or more. Also, the right to elect representatives to State legislative bodies on a similar basis.
9. The right to job training and employment on the basis of affirmative action, to union protection, on-the-job safety, in health, education, housing, economic and job development, in order to counter centuries of oppression. Benefits to be received irrespective of place of residence, on or off the reservation.
10. Support the fight of Native American Indian peoples in their demands for reparations, technical and financial aid, and governmental aid to those Native peoples living in urban areas who choose to be repatriated to their homelands.

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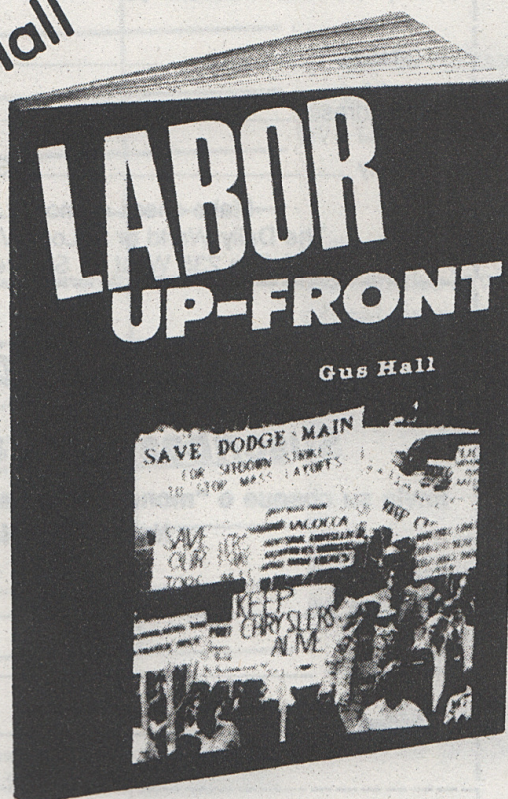
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